

- As a teenager St. Clare became familiar with St. Francis of Assisi through his preaching, and being profoundly affected by his words, she in time decided to follow him.
- Keep in mind that St. Clare came from a wealthy family who expected her to marry for their own political advantage. Both of her parents came from noble lineage, and there were great expectations placed on St. Clare about how she would live her life.
- Nevertheless, on the night of Palm Sunday in 1212, the 18-year old Clare snuck out of her father's home to meet St. Francis and his followers in their Porciuncula Chapel.
- There the beautiful, long tresses of her hair were shorn from her head, and she exchanged her exquisite dress and jewel-studded belt for a coarse woolen habit and knotted rope cincture.
- When St. Clare's father and uncles learned where she was, they stormed the Benedictine convent in which St. Francis had entrusted her to take her home by force.
- As they tried to grab St. Clare, she threw off her veil to show her cropped hair, and she clung to the altar – adamantly proclaiming that Jesus was her bridegroom, and that she wanted no other husband than Him. It was a moment of both faith and courage for Clare.
- Seeing Clare's determination, her father eventually relented. Interestingly, in time her mother and two of her sisters would follow Clare into the religious community for women she eventually founded with St. Francis, whom we now know as the Poor Clares.
- This marvelous story – which is just one of many marvelous stories about St. Clare – reveals her courageous determination to follow God's will, as well as her deep faith in our Lord.
- By faith, St. Clare knew the love and mercy of her bridegroom; she knew that God was impelling her to be His bride. And by courage she was determined to follow His will no matter what the cost. That's why she's a saint! Today is St. Clare's feast day.
- It's our determination to follow God's will – faithfully trusting in God's grace while courageously seeking to be united with Him despite whatever suffering doing so might bring – that makes us saints.
- Beautifully, the virtues of faith and courage are two themes arising from our readings today. In particular our readings today encourage us to be courageous in our faith.
- In other words, if we truly have faith in the Lord's goodness and love, we should find courage to live as God wills us to live. Christian courage has faith in God and the promise of eternal life as its source and strength.
- In our first reading from the Book of Wisdom, we are told of the courage the Israelites possessed because of the faith they had in their covenantal relationship with the Lord.
- The Israelites knew of the Lord's love for them in making them the chosen people. They had faith in His love, a love that was strengthened and made indissoluble because of their covenant with Him, and this enabled them to be courageous in the face hardship.
- And in the second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews, the author expounds upon the utter beauty of the virtue of faith as seen through the example of Abraham.
- Certainly, Abraham had to exercise a great deal of courage and faith to do all the Lord asked of Him, even being willing to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice. Yet he did it because he was looking forward to Heaven, to the city whose architect and maker is God.
- Today's Gospel picks up where last Sunday's Gospel left off in the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Luke.

- Whereas last Sunday we were warned of the dangers of trusting in the goods of this world, today we are told to prepare ourselves for Christ's return by saving up an inexhaustible treasure in heaven.
- Truly, we do not know when the Lord will come for us. So, it's of greatest importance that we're ready for Him, that we are vigilant, like servants waiting for their master's return.
- The best way we can prepare for meeting our Lord is by faithfully and courageously following His will now, here on earth. By faith we must keep in mind Who our Lord is and what He has told us, and by courage we must live our faith with fidelity.
- Very beautifully, our Lord encourages us today with these words: "Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for the Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom." Meditate on those words for just a moment: the Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom!
- In these tender words we can see that God wants to save us: that He wants us to have faith in His desire to save us! So even though our Gospel speaks of judgment and punishment and the expectations our Lord has of us, there is great hope expressed as well.
- Living in this way: conscious that we will one day face judgment for our earthly lives, yet hopeful in God's mercy and in His desire to save us from our sins, is at the heart of the Christian understanding of God and of how our relationship with Him should be ordered.
- There's a balance for us to strike here so that we avoid excessive fear of God's wrath, on one hand, and presumption of His mercy on the other. So while we must have a deep respect and awe for God, we must also trust Him as children instinctively trust their fathers.
- This balance in the way we understand God's expectations and approach Him is what should guide us and motivate us in seeking out His will and courageously following it.
- Our God is a mighty God to be sure, One Who is all-powerful and all-knowing. He is the Creator and Ruler of all things. Nothing exists or remains in existence without Him. His judgment and power are absolute, and we all have to face Him some day.
- And yet despite His ineffable greatness, He remains a personal God – One we can come to know. He is a God of love, a God of mercy. He is a God Who suffers both with and for His people. He is a Good Shepherd Who sees us as His flock.
- Understand this: God is not some passive or disinterested bystander in your life! He's always near to give us whatever grace we need to follow His will. He wants us to be saved!
- So we must have faith to believe in His goodness and love, and courage enough to call upon Him. For when we have faith in His goodness and the courage to rely on His grace, it is then that we can hope confidently in His salvation and be resolute in following His will.
- And it is in hoping in salvation and following His will that we prepare ourselves for eternal union with Him in Heaven. Faith plus courage equals sanctity!
- My dear brothers and sisters, one day all of us are going to have face our Lord. As today's Gospel makes clear, we never know when our Lord may come to take us, and so we must be ready to die and make an accounting for ourselves at a moment's notice.
- The best preparation we can make is by faithfully and courageously living as our Lord would have us live: obediently following His commandments and doing our best to fulfill the obligations of our vocation.
- Let us pray, therefore, for an increase in these virtues of faith and courage: faith so that we may know and believe in God's love and goodness, and courage so that we may follow God's will no matter what the cost.
- St. Clare of Assisi, pray for us!